



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Public Health

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July 2, 2012

TO: Michael D. Antonovich, Supervisor
Fifth Supervisorial District

FROM:  Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **CHRONIC ISSUES OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS IN
LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

This is in response to your June 8, 2012 letter regarding homeless veterans and a constituent's concerns that a recent Skid Row inspection and related findings conducted by Department of Public Health's (DPH) Environmental Health Program could result in the eviction of homeless veterans from Skid Row. The constituent also requested that DPH advocate for an emergency shelter to be built on the Veterans Administration's (VA) West Los Angeles campus to house homeless veterans.

The survey of Skid Row referenced by the constituent was a routine environmental health inspection intended to assess and record public health violations, such as feces, urine and hypodermic needles found on the streets. These conditions must be addressed in order to minimizing health risks to the public and area residents, including homeless individuals. The displacement of individuals or the eviction of homeless veterans was not the focus of our survey and related reinspection. These inspections constitute preliminary measure to address immediate public health violations but as you indicate do not address the underlying issues of homelessness.

DPH has a varied role in homeless-related activities including participation in Project 50 and public health nursing services in Skid Row, as well as providing substance abuse treatment and tuberculosis control services to homeless individuals. DPH also conducts environmental health inspections of emergency and transitional housing.

DPH works closely with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) on a variety of coalitions and workgroups that address the needs of the homeless in Los Angeles County. One coalition is the Los Angeles County Interagency Council on Homelessness (LACICH) whose goal is to develop and sustain an interdepartmental plan that will seek to prevent and end homelessness in Los Angeles County. The LACICH is planning to include a workgroup focusing entirely on veteran homelessness. DPH will participate actively in this work group to provide a public health perspective and related public health expertise.

Michael D. Antonovich, Supervisor
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Additionally, we will raise this issue with the CEO's homeless coordinator to identify ways the DPH can partner more effectively with the VA and related agencies on homeless issues.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please let me know.

JEF:aml
PH:1206:006

c: Shelia Shima
Jonathan E. Freedman
Anna Long
Maxanne Hatch